

Cerritos, CA - Rep. Linda Sánchez gave the following remarks at the City of Cerritos Veteran's Day Celebration November 11, 2009:

"I am honored to be here as we commemorate the bravery, sacrifice, and service of our nation's veterans, particularly those right here in our community.

"Those of you who serve, and those who remain behind, deserve our deepest gratitude for your sacrifice. For putting our nation's interests above your self-interest. For defending our Constitution, our country, and our way of life. And for your commitment from the time of enlistment and throughout the rest of your lives. You have earned our support.

"I am grateful that each year, our nation sets aside a day to honor our servicemen and women, who serve both at home and abroad, who volunteer to put themselves in harm's way to protect the freedoms that we take for granted. Certainly, you deserve our thanks every day, but Veterans Day reminds us to give the thanks that we owe daily.

"As a nation, we have been good at honoring our men and women in the Armed Forces with commemorative holidays, parades, and medals. But we have not always been good at fulfilling our promises to our veterans.

"While our warm words of thanks are warranted, they are not enough.

"We owe a sacred trust to every man and woman who wears the uniform of the United States of America. We owe them the best care they were promised, and the benefits and support that they have selflessly earned.

"We must ensure that during their service and after, they don't need to also fight bureaucracies to receive GI benefits, healthcare, or pension payments.

"We have an obligation to meet the needs of our returning veterans and their families by providing care and support for both the physical and emotional wounds, as well as educational and employment assistance to help make the transition to civilian life successful.

"I am especially proud that Congress has passed legislation this session that honors those commitments by providing the largest funding increase for health care ever requested by a President or veterans organizations.

"This funding has strengthened health care through the addition of 17,000 new doctors and nurses, more community-based outpatient clinics and new Vet Centers, expanded mental health screening and treatment, and improved access for veterans in rural areas.

"I am proud that the new Post 9-11 GI Bill, which went into effect in August, provides the opportunity for a full, four-year college education, and that this benefit is transferable to family members, including to all children of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, regardless of the length of military service of the parent.

“During these tough economic times, Congress has enacted a military pay raise, tax credits for businesses who hire unemployed veterans, tax cuts for servicemembers and families, disabled veterans relief, stop-loss payments, help for military families harmed by the housing crisis, expanded homeownership opportunities, and tuition assistance and training opportunities for military spouses seeking careers that can be maintained as they move from station to station.

“These efforts are just a few of the investments Congress is making in our servicemembers. We must keep working to fulfill our promises to those who protect of us. We must keep our promises to those who have kept theirs.

“While we may not all agree with a President’s decision to use or not to use military force in a given situation, we can agree that those who answered the call of service and sacrifice to our country deserve our support and gratitude. The debt we owe to them is immeasurable.

“Our servicemembers and their families deserve to have all the tools necessary while on active duty, and those needed to resume their lives when they return. I will continue to fight in Congress to ensure that we keep our promises and commitments to you - our nation’s heroes.

Rep. Linda Sánchez is the sponsor of legislation to provide long overdue recognition to thousands of Vietnam War veterans for their dedicated service to our country by designating March 30 as “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.” March 30 marks the day when the last U.S. troops completed their service in Vietnam.